

Draft Minute of Cairngorm Deer Advisory Group Meeting

Date: 22 January 2008

Time: 10am

Venue: CNPA office, Grantown-on-Spey

Present: Phil Ratcliffe (Chair), Michael Hone (CSDMG), Ewan Cameron (AofCC), Alastair Colquhoun (AofCC), Richard Cooke (EGDMG, ADMG), Patrick Thompson (MWAHA, ELEDMG), Jamie Williamson (MDMG), Paul Timms (SNH), Willie Lamont (FCS), Iain Hope (DCS), John Bruce (BDS), Simon Blackett (EGDMG), Caroline Warburton, WildScotland, Hamish Trench, Fiona Chalmers and Colin McClean (all CNPA)

1. Welcome and apologies

Apologies were received from Richard Wallace, Dick Balharry and Bruce Anderson.

2. Matters arising

Matters arising from the meeting on 6th November were dealt with in Papers CDAG 1 and CDAG 2 22012008. Action 6 concerned the effectiveness of the LLTNP leaflet entitled "Deer in the National Park." Phil had received information from Grant Moir, LLTNP. The response from Grant Moir is attached to this minute (Appendix 1) and will be discussed further at our next meeting.

All other Actions had been discharged or were the subject of agenda items.

3. Matters arising from the subgroup meeting on 10th December 2007.

The subgroup recommended that CDAG set up a permanent executive committee. After discussion it was **agreed** that a Chairman's Committee would be established. Membership would be fluid with the Chair co-opting people as required. The Chairman's Committee will produce papers/ proposals for CDAG to consider, with all decisions being taken by CDAG.

Action 1: Establish Chairman's Committee. Action: Phil Ratcliffe.

4. Update on Joint Working.

Paper CDAG4 22012008 was presented for information. Questions were asked about deer management at Mar Lodge. Members felt communication between Mar Lodge and other deer interests could be improved and some felt a recent meeting with neighbours should have involved more landowners. It was also felt the recent public meeting in Braemar should have been better advertised.

DCS reported that the results of the woodland profile survey at Mar Lodge, carried out by FCS in 2007, would be made available to CDAG members shortly.

Action 2: Chris Hewitt, Mar Lodge Property Manager, to be invited to present details on Mar Lodge deer management at the next CDAG meeting. **Action: Colin McClean.**

Action 3: Results of the FCS woodland profile survey at Mar Lodge to be circulated to CDAG members when available. **Action: Colin McClean.**

5. Developing a Cairngorms National Park deer management framework.

Paper CDAG5 22012008 was prepared as a result of the subgroup meeting in December. The subgroup decided that overcoming current barriers to inclusive deer management planning was the most important issue to be addressed. The subgroup had recommended that the preparation of a Cairngorms National Park deer management framework, which would seek to implement the draft Joint Agency Strategy for Wild Deer, would be the best way to overcome current barriers. The proposal was that the framework would be owned by CDAG, would update and link up existing DMG deer management plans and seek to form a coherent strategy/ plan for the Park. Preparation would be resourced by CNPA and the draft framework would be subject to thorough consultation.

There was much discussion on the purpose of a CNP deer management framework. Different people saw the framework as:

- a platform for more effective communication about deer management,
- a means of addressing issues of inclusivity, elitism and public perceptions of blood-sports,
- a means of linking up existing DMG deer management plans,
- a means of implementing the Joint Agency Strategy for Wild Deer and the Cairngorms National Park Plan and linking those documents to DMG plans.
- an opportunity for exploring marketing, socio economics and wildlife tourism,
- a means of helping communities to exploit opportunities arising from deer,
- interpreting deer management to visitors,
- a prescriptive deer management plan,
- a means of reducing deer management conflict through consultation,
- a platform for reconciling different management objectives,
- an opportunity for agencies to give a more positive message about deer management.

Difficult issues were discussed including:

- ensuring clear separation between the role of CDAG and DMGs,
- the Park boundary is not an effective deer management unit,
- the strategic level at which the framework operates,
- prescriptive or not prescriptive,
- identifying what conflicts deer management actually causes,
- how to maintain differential densities.

Discussion reached few conclusions. There was **agreement** that a framework would be useful but no agreement about what it should include. There was consensus that the framework should operate at a strategic level above that of DMG deer management plans and should not be prescriptive in terms of deer numbers/ densities. Population targets etc are issues that should be addressed in DMG plans.

Action 4: Circulate the LLTNP strategic deer management plan. Establish how useful the LLTNP plan has been. **Action: Phil Ratcliffe/ Colin McClean.**

Action 5: Produce paper which identifies the conflicts associated with deer management. **Action: Colin McClean.**

Action 6: Re-draft CDAG5 22012008 in light of discussion. Include an analysis of alternatives to framework. Circulate to CDAG for further comment. **Action: Phil Ratcliffe/ Colin McClean.**

Action 7: Encourage DMGs to discuss the issue of a CNP deer management framework. **Action: DMG representatives.**

Action 8: In light of discussion about the framework, produce paper about desirability of holding a Cairngorms deer management seminar with clear objectives and a clear audience. **Action: Colin McClean.**

6. SRDP: Opportunities for funding. Fiona Chalmers, CNPA.

Fiona's presentation is shown in Appendix 2.

Fiona emphasised that applications that covered big areas of land, achieved multiple objectives and scored highly on collaboration and integration would have a greater chance of success. This created opportunities for DMGs to demonstrate delivery of public benefit through collaboration. Speyside DMG were thought to be in a good position to apply but it was felt other DMGs needed help to produce good quality SRDP applications. CNPA were planning to recruit 2 posts to encourage high quality applications which would achieve the best

outcomes for the Park and for SRDP applicants. The new posts would be able to provide practical help to DMGs and other applicants. Fiona was thanked for an informative presentation.

7. Deer as a wildlife tourism resource. Caroline Warburton, Wild Scotland.

The text of Caroline's presentation is summarised below. Wild Scotland is the wildlife tourism association for Scotland. It is a business association of some 70 members all of whom make their livelihood from taking people out to see wildlife. Wild Scotland aims to promote wildlife tourism, raise awareness of the opportunities to see wildlife with Wild Scotland members and encourage best practice and high standards for wildlife tourism operators. Wild Scotland has produced codes of conduct for operators working from boats, vehicles and on foot. The key wildlife attractions for tourists are red deer, cetaceans, otters, seals, seabirds and raptors. Red deer are an iconic image of Scotland and are impressive both because of their size and numbers. As a result they are relatively easy to find and watch. Watching deer provides a hook to interpret other wildlife and the history of upland Scotland.

Deer watching is unlikely to be a stand alone, year round commercial product. Operators should look to interpret deer and then link interpretation to other wildlife, ecology and history. Operators must identify their market and meet the expectations of that market. Tourists do expect good quality facilities. Promotion should be based on realistic expectations. Good customer service is vital and operators should link their business to other local businesses eg guest houses. Existing models include a) Balmoral Land Rover Safaris which involve a 3 hour Land Rover trip conducted by a ranger at £45 per head. There were 250 customers in 2006.

b) Atholl Estates operate similar tours conducted by their head stalker and marketed locally, in particular at their caravan park. Tours were originally a full day but the estate realised shorter (3hour) trips were more viable as they appealed to families. Deer are part of the experience but many other aspects of the estate are also covered.

c) Highland Safaris, Aberfeldy are an independent operator who work with local host estates in exchange for reasonable access. Tours are conducted by Land Rover.

d) The wildlife hide at Rothiemurchus enables visitors to view badgers, pine marten, squirrels, roe deer etc. The hide hosts 15 people per night at £20 per head.

Funding for hides could be available under SRDP.

Caroline was thanked for an excellent, thought provoking presentation.

Action 9: DMGs to consider inviting Caroline to their meetings. Action: DMG representatives.
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8. CDAG response to Joint Agency "Strategy for Wild Deer."

CDAG members were currently responding to the consultation on the draft strategy either as individuals or as representative bodies. There was discussion about whether CDAG wished to prepare a formal CDAG response to the draft. It was **agreed** that Phil would draft a response highlighting 2-3 headline messages which all members of CDAG are likely to support. This would be circulated for comment.

Action 10: Produce draft response and circulate to members for comment. **Action: Phil Ratcliffe.**

9. Sika deer issues in the CNP.

Presentation of this paper was postponed for a subsequent meeting due to time constraints.

Action 11: Present paper at next CDAG meeting. **Action: Colin McClean.**

10. CNPA deer post.

Colin McClean declared an interest and left the room. Discussion was recorded by the Chair. A brief discussion indicated unanimous support for the draft letter to the NP convenor expressing CDAG endorsement for the continuance of the support provided by the CNPA deer officer. An additional paragraph indicating CDAG support and commendation for Colin McClean's individual contribution and continuation in the role was agreed.

Action 12: Chair to amend draft and send to NP Convenor. **Action: Phil Ratcliffe.**

11. AOB.

There was some discussion of desirable ecological outcomes for Joint Working sites and whether it was appropriate for CDAG to input to discussions on these outcomes. It was suggested such issues could be raised by members through the agenda rather than unannounced discussion .

It was agreed that CDAG needed better links with DMGs.

Iain Hope mentioned that DCS, with input from SNH, FCS and CNPA, was in the process of carrying out a study of the socio economic implications associated with large scale reductions in deer populations and that some of the study areas were in the Cairngorms National Park.

Action 13: Chair to write to DMGs reminding them of the role of CDAG. **Action: Phil Ratcliffe.**

12. Date of next meeting.

1030am, 4 June 2008 CNPA office, Grantown-on-Spey. Meetings are scheduled for 3 hours, ie to close at 1330 (lunch will be provided).

Please note change of time from previous meeting.

Colin McClean
25 January 2008

Appendix 1: Response from Grant Moir LLNPA to Phil Ratcliffe's request for info on the uptake of the LLNPA "Deer in the Park" leaflet.

Phil

The leaflet was distributed to all our visitor centres and I asked our Visitor Centre Manager about take up etc. It is his opinion that the leaflet is not one that is a 'natural' visitor leaflet and that it does not have a format that is particularly useful to visitors on a day out. My understanding is that the leaflet was an 'awareness raising' leaflet but that the target audience for the leaflet was not fully considered.

I think personally that it is a pretty good and informative leaflet (I think the sections on the 'deer year', where to see deer, and the Hillphones section are probably most useful) but that it is not something that the generic visitor would naturally pick up. I am also unsure how much a hillwalker or rambler would use it.

I think if we were to do something again we would do a web based info sheet that covers the main points.

Hope this is helpful
Regards
Grant

Appendix 2: SRDP: Opportunities for funding. Fiona Chalmers, CNPA.

Scotland Rural Development Programme

What is it?

- £1.6bn programme of public funding for Rural Development 2007 to 2013
- Amalgamates and replaces most of the other schemes for agri-environment or forestry
- Includes;
 - ❑ LFASS - £427m
 - ❑ Leader - c£80m
 - ❑ Rural Development Contracts – LMOs – c£90m
 - ❑ Rural Development Contracts– Rural Priorities – c£500m
 - ❑ Processing & Marketing - £70m
 - ❑ Crofting Counties Scheme – £35m
 - ❑ Forestry Challenge Fund (WIAT & Woods for People) - £14m
 - ❑ Training Scheme – £12m
 - ❑ Legacy scheme payments (RSS, CPS, SFGS etc.)- £330m
- Doesn't include;
 - ❑ Single Farm Payment

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Scotland Rural Development Programme

What's different?

- Buying benefits for the people of Scotland
- Five key outcomes;
 - ❑ Business Viability and Competiveness
 - ❑ Environmental improvements
 - Water
 - Climate change
 - Landscape and Biodiversity
 - ❑ Thriving Rural Communities
- 32 National Priorities with regional amendments
- 'Regionalisation' of national list and assessment by Regional Proposal Assessment Committee (rPAC) – three cover the Cairngorms
- Anyone who can deliver the outcomes is eligible

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Scotland Rural Development Programme *What will be funded?*

- High Quality applications that meet one or more of the Regional Priorities
- Three groups of assessment;
 - 1. Fit with Regional Priority**
 - Quality
 - Quantity
 - Collaboration
 - Integration
 - Multiple Outcomes
 - Innovation
 - Contribution to National targets
 - 2. Value for money**
 - Additionality
 - Added value
 - Long term benefit
 - Leverage potential
 - 3. Risk Management**
 - Meeting demand
 - Minimising impacts
 - Feasibility

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Scotland Rural Development Programme *Potential for Deer Managers?*

Business Viability and Competiveness - Priority 5

- National Priority = New or expanded demand led markets
- **Grampian priority (draft) =**
 - support the collaborative development and marketing of new products, particularly quality regional identity for food & drink, energy and other products arising from primary sector production, based on appropriate Marketing strategies
- **Potential projects?**
 - Collaborative ventures involving;
 - Joint supply and processing
 - Joint marketing
 - linking with local retailers

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Scotland Rural Development Programme *Potential for Deer Managers?*

Environmental Improvements - Priority 12

- National Priority = Increase in area of connected natural habitats and ecological features
- Highland priority (draft) =
 - Through well founded and effective action: an increase in the area of connected natural habitats and ecological features in Highland associated with:
 - riparian/wetland corridors and woodland habitat networks;
 - **landscape scale approaches to deer management for biodiversity;**
 - improvement to extensive peatland sites.
- Potential projects?
 - Implementation of DMP objectives;
 - Patchwork of densities
 - Tree regeneration
 - Additional management activities at landscape scale

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Scotland Rural Development Programme *Potential for Deer Managers?*

➤ Thriving Rural Communities - Priority 30

- National Priority = Improvement in the value and duration of tourism visits
 - **Highland priority** (draft) =
 - support tourism developments based on the special qualities of the area eg. wildlife, outdoor activities, arts, culture
 - **Grampian priority** (draft) =
 - maximise activity, recreation, culture, wildlife and green tourism.
- Potential projects?
 - Deer watching with stalkers
 - Landover trips
 - Collaboration with wildlife tourism companies or accommodation providers

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Scotland Rural Development Programme

How to find out more

- Public meetings – 7pm
 - Aviemore 31st January – Aviemore Hotel
 - Ballater 7th February – Glen Lui Hotel
- Information pack
- Guidance will be available on-line – SRDP website
- Programme of support in Cairngorms National Park